Introduction
Matthew O. Hunt and George Wilson

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Despite Barack Obama’s generally “race-neutral” campaign strategy and subsequent policy agenda, his election as the forty-fourth president of the United States has reinvigorated discussions of the meaning of race and the roles of racial discrimination and inequality in shaping the life chances of African Americans and other ethno-racial minorities (Ford 2009; Smith and King 2009). Some observers—particularly political conservatives and various proponents of a “color-blind” perspective and agenda—see Obama’s election as further evidence of the country’s transition to a “postracial” age (Schorr 2008; Williams 2008). Others are less sanguine, lamenting the Obama presidency’s potential to divert public attention from the stark racial disparities still characterizing American society (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich, this volume).

This debate over the implications of the Obama presidency occurs in an era when scholarly attention to the intersections of race, ideology, and inequality has been expanding in concert with the growing racial and ethnic diversity of American society. During the past several decades, sociologists, political scientists, and psychologists have led the way in addressing a wide range of issues...
concerning the roles of race, and its perceived importance, in the workings of the American stratification system. Examples of such work include (but are not limited to) analyses of intergroup prejudice (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Oliver and Wong 2003) and various manifestations of a so-called “new racism” (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Sears, Sidanius, and Bobo 2000; Krysan 2000), beliefs about the availability of opportunity (Kluegel and Smith 1986) and lay explanations of socioeconomic and racial inequalities (Kluegel 1990; Hunt 2007), and the proliferation of a “color-blind” discourse in American society regarding opportunity and the causes of inequalities (Krysan and Lewis 2006; Bonilla-Silva 2006).

Such work stems from two primary, and sometimes overlapping, scholarly domains: racial attitudes and stratification beliefs. *Racial attitudes* research focuses on the antecedents and consequences of beliefs about race, racial prejudice, and racial policy support (Krysan 2000; Schuman et al. 1997). *Stratification beliefs* research focuses on beliefs about the causes of social and economic inequalities (including patterns by race) and the implications of such for relevant public policies (Kluegel and Smith 1980, 1986). Scholarship in these two areas has incorporated “race” in two primary ways: as a *predictor*, focusing on how race/ethnic group membership shapes patterns of adherence to various ideological beliefs and worldviews; and as part of the *content* of ideologies, beliefs, and worldviews. And while important in its own right, research on racial attitudes and stratification beliefs has enormous practical implications because perceptions of the role of race in the operation of the stratification system affect patterns of intergroup relations (e.g., trust and inclusiveness) and shape levels of support for policies designed to ameliorate racial and socioeconomic inequality in American society.

The current volume of *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* continues in this tradition by showcasing the research of a set of leading scholars using a diverse mix of methodological and theoretical approaches to broaden our understanding of the complex intersections of race, ideology, and inequality. These are timely issues both because of the nascent Obama “era” and because the last seminal volumes on racial attitudes (Schuman et al. 1997; Tuch and Martin 1997; Sears, Sidanius, and Bobo 2000) and stratification beliefs (Kluegel and Smith 1986) are at least one and two decades old, respectively.1 Thus, the current volume stands on the shoulders of giants while updating our knowledge with a set of cutting-edge research articles speaking to key issues of the day.

**Race, Inequality, and Ideology in Specific Institutional Domains**

The first several articles in this volume explore the dynamics of race, inequality, and ideology in relation to specific institutional domains or issues of national concern: crime, religion, work, and immigration/national inclusion.

Thompson and Bobo offer a much-needed study that moves attitudes about crime—a well-documented source of tension between blacks and whites in the United States (Weitzer and Tuch 2005; Hagan, Shedd, and Payne 2005)—more
squarely into the purview of the social science literature on stratification beliefs. Specifically, these authors use data from the 2001 Race, Crime, and Public Opinion project to explore the nature, determinants, and policy-related consequences of causal attributions for crime involvement. Their efforts bear significant fruit: race clearly shapes beliefs about crime causation, with whites more likely than blacks to adopt “individualist” attributions, and blacks more likely to hold “structuralist” ones (though whites and blacks show fairly similar levels of support for “mixed” explanations that combine individualist and structuralist attributions). Furthermore, whites’ beliefs appear more firmly rooted in political ideology, while blacks’ views appear more closely tied to exposure to, and fear of, crime. Finally, these attributions play a role in explaining the race difference in crime policy attitudes, with structuralists more likely than individualists to stress nonpunitive responses to crime and to advocate crime control solutions emphasizing educational opportunities and jobs rather than police and prisons. As with analyses of attitudes toward a range of socioeconomic redistributive policies (Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Hunt 2007), causal attributions prove to be an important tool in shedding light on the causes and consequences of race-specific worldviews around the issue of crime in America. Overall, Thompson and Bobo teach us that there is much to be gained by extending the tools of stratification beliefs research to the dynamics of social cognition around the issue of crime.

In the next article, Light, Roscigno, and Kalev shift our attention to the world of work via an analysis of employers’ and employees’ interpretations of minority employees’ unfavorable work outcomes (e.g., firings and denials of promotion), including how racial stereotypes and “color-blind” ideologies shape employers’ decisions and interpretations. Using data from 250 randomly selected racial discrimination cases, filed with and verified by the Ohio Civil Rights Commission (OCRC) between 1988 and 2003, these authors offer a nuanced account of stratification processes and ideologies in the context of a neglected topic in the workplace literature: processes by which racially discriminatory outcomes are generated (see Reskin 2003; Wilson 2007; Roscigno 2007). In particular, the authors situate a set of beliefs associated with the tenets of color-blind racism (see Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich, this volume) as a key element in a complex relational dynamic that includes employee perceptions and specific forms of discrimination behavior. A particularly unique contribution of this study is the empirical demonstration of the intersections of employer and employee beliefs in the context of workplace discrimination events. Contextualizing stratification ideology in this manner is no small feat and operates as a component of relational discrimination “encounters,” which the authors convincingly argue is the appropriate unit of analysis (rather than particular human actors—the typical focus when employee and employer attitudes are analyzed) if we are to understand processes of unfolding discrimination. This relational approach emerges as an important new direction and should be utilized to chart configurations of discrimination linking attitudes and behavior.

Next, the Taylor and Merino article focuses our attention on the issue of religion as an important and neglected factor shaping stratification ideology. Specifically,
these authors use data from the 1996 through 2006 General Social Surveys (GSS) to explore black-white differences in the relationship between religious affiliation and (1) beliefs about the causes of racial inequality and (2) support for race-targeted policies. In so doing, they bring valuable evidence to bear on a literature that has often neglected “religious factors” (but see Emerson and Smith 2000) and that has privileged the study of whites over examination of the views of important racial minority populations (Hunt 2002; Hunt et al. 2000). Using a typology of twelve “race by religion” categories, Taylor and Merino demonstrate—in contrast to common assumptions based on selected prior work—that the racial stratification beliefs of white conservative Protestants (e.g., Evangelicals) are not uniquely conservative relative to other white Christian groups once background characteristics are controlled. Instead, white Christians of all stripes share a heightened racial conservatism relative to white non-Christians (e.g., Jews and nonaffiliates). In addition, compared with black groups, white Christians are less structuralist in orientation, slightly more individualistic, and clearly less supportive of policies designed to aid African Americans. And finally, this research shows that blacks are not as internally differentiated on the basis of religious affiliation as one might expect based on past work.

Next, in a thought-provoking article, Hochschild and Lang bring an important comparative (i.e., cross-national) perspective to this volume through an examination of attitudes toward immigration and national inclusion. Using data from ten wealthy democracies captured in the 2003 International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), these authors explore how social structural and identity factors (e.g., race, religion, and citizenship) are associated with perceptions of “self-inclusiveness” and support for the “inclusion of others” both within and between nations. Their findings are compelling and should serve to spur significant research into their underpinnings. These authors show, for instance, that countries where residents feel most included are also generally those in which there is greatest resistance to outsiders—an issue having implications for employers of nonnative workers and government policies regarding immigrant incorporation. In addition, countries in which public opinion is most extreme are not necessarily those in which questions of inclusion have generated the most political controversy—pointing to the need for fine-grained analyses of the conditions under which public opinion shapes policy disputes and of ways in which surveys reflect genuine public sentiment. Furthermore, within the countries examined, noncitizens and members of religious minorities and racial/ethnic minorities generally feel less included and believe more strongly in incorporating outsiders than do majority-group members, though this generalization does not always hold. For example, in the United States, blacks and whites have similarly low scores on the goal of including outsiders. All told, this study’s findings demonstrate why questions of racial stratification, religious tolerance, and immigrant incorporation prove so difficult to resolve in democratic polities. They also demonstrate the utility of cross-national/comparative analysis in opening new vistas for academic endeavors and political coalition-building.
The remaining articles in the current volume all deal, in one way or another, with racial policy attitudes or the changing nature of racism in twenty-first-century America.

On the Meaning, Measurement, and Implications of Racial Resentment

Three articles in this volume deal directly with current debates over the nature of modern racial prejudice, focusing on the measurement and the implications of a specific topic in the “new racism” literature: racial resentment (Kinder and Sanders 1996). The conceptualization and meaning of contemporary racial prejudice is a fundamental issue in the social sciences; indeed, the nature of a newer, more subtle kind of anti-black sentiment (to replace traditional, more overt, “Jim Crow” prejudice) has been the subject of much scholarly work and controversy in recent years (Sears, Sidanius, and Bobo 2000). As others have noted, identifying the nature of racial resentment is difficult and represents an attempt to specify the nature of modern anti-black sentiment in a way uncontaminated by simultaneously evolving attitudes toward social stratification and politics.

In the first of these articles, Carmines, Sniderman, and Easter take issue with Kinder and Sanders’s (1996) measurement of racial prejudice (an index of racial stereotypes) and their corresponding argument that racial resentment and racial prejudice are largely overlapping and generally comparable predictors of whites’ attitudes about racial policy. Through a critique and alternative specification of racial prejudice—using the same items from the 1992 American National Election Study (ANES) that Kinder and Sanders used—Carmines and colleagues suggest that the association between racial resentment and racial prejudice is substantially weaker than heretofore claimed. They go on to question whether racial resentment and racial policy attitudes are, in fact, empirically and conceptually distinct phenomena. Based on their results, Carmines, Sniderman, and Easter conclude that racial resentment, as traditionally operationalized, is not a valid measure of racism, thus raising foundational questions about the “new racism” concept and about the conclusion that such racism dominates the political reasoning of white Americans.

In the next article, Wilson and Davis also raise questions about Kinder and Sanders’s (1996) approach to the issue of racial resentment and propose a new measurement strategy designed to capture what the authors call “explicit racial resentment” (EXR). While Wilson and Davis accept key tenets of existing definitions of racial resentment, they object to how it has been operationalized. Specifically, Wilson and Davis contend that the survey items commonly used to measure racial resentment (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Carmines, Sniderman, and Easter, this volume) are contaminated by explicit references to government programs and attempts to assess anti-black sentiment relative to sentiment toward
other groups, as well as having substantial conceptual and empirical overlap with the related construct of “symbolic racism.” With this backdrop, the authors introduce four new EXR survey items via two convenience samples of college undergraduates. Their analyses reveal that their EXR index has statistically sound measurement properties and is meaningfully related to other established correlates of racial attitudes. Such findings suggest substantial promise for the EXR items as an alternative or supplementary measure of racial resentment. As white Americans’ racial attitudes continue to evolve in the face of significant events such as the election of President Obama (Welch and Sigelman, this volume), it is useful to have a range of survey indicators to aid researchers in developing valid and mature conceptions of the complex racial dynamics characterizing the new millennium. Wilson and Davis take a meaningful step in moving us in this direction.

Finally, Tuch and Hughes, in a piece that nicely encompasses the major themes of the current volume, use data from the ANES and GSS to explore how racial resentment and a host of other attitudinal and demographic predictors shape white Americans’ views of racial policies. The ANES and GSS share several “racial principle” and “racial policy” items in common, but each also contains important explanatory variables that the other lacks. This approach offers a more robust analysis of racial policy outlooks than is typically employed and allows for exploration of the replicability of key findings across these two major social surveys. Interestingly, in light of prevailing rhetoric regarding an increasingly postracial society in the United States, Tuch and Hughes find no evidence that whites’ views of racial policy have meaningfully shifted in the past three decades. Furthermore, racial resentment clearly emerges as the strongest determinant of whites’ attitudes about racial policy (compared to factors such as traditional prejudice, economic individualism, egalitarianism, and political ideology) in both the GSS and ANES, suggesting that ongoing debates regarding the meaning and measurement of racial resentment (see Carmines, Sniderman, and Easter, this volume; and Wilson and Davis, this volume) are critically important if we are truly to understand whites’ racial attitudes in twenty-first-century America.

Social Context, Stereotypes, and Racial (and Nonracial) Policy Support

Two additional articles address issues of long-standing concern to scholars interested in the social and psychological bases of whites’ policy attitudes: the impact of social context on racial policy outlooks (Oliver and Wong 2003; Taylor 1998; Welch et al. 2001) and the role of racial prejudice in shaping support for (ostensibly) nonracial policy matters (Gilens 1999; Krysan 2000).

In the first of these articles, McDermott uses data from the 1992 to 1994 Multi-city Study of Urban Inequality (MCSUI) to expand the scope of research on context effects by incorporating and simultaneously examining measures of social class (e.g., education, occupation, and income) and racial composition at
three distinct levels of analysis: the metropolitan area ("city"), the census block group ("neighborhood"), and the interview situation itself. In addition, McDermott explores how such factors interact across levels of analysis to shape racial attitudes and policy outlooks. The author’s efforts pay off via a rich and nuanced set of results. Social class factors at the neighborhood level and the racial context of the interview situation—when they do affect the modeled outcomes—tend to do so directly. In contrast, the racial composition of cities and neighborhoods tends to matter via cross-level interaction effects. For instance, the percentage of a neighborhood that is black moderates the individual-level effect of being African American such that blacks’ support for affirmative action programs is weakened as the proportion of black residents at the neighborhood level increases. Such findings highlight an important message of this study: the contextual sources of individual racial attitudes are more complex than has been previously documented. As such, future research should incorporate additional measures of context and examine their additive and interactive effects, on a broader range of outcomes.

Next, Wilson and Nielsen shift our attention to the so-called “color-coding” phenomenon via an exploration of how whites’ racial prejudice affects support for ostensibly nonracial social welfare matters (Gilens 1999). Specifically, using data from the 1996 to 2002 GSS, these authors examine how whites’ racial stereotypes shape “social problem spending” to elucidate whether and how whites “racially code” a range of contemporary social issues such as urban problems, crime control, and drug addiction. The authors also model support for spending on “welfare” and “aid to blacks”—two issues known to invoke racial stereotypes—as an empirical and comparative baseline for examining the other spending outcomes. The authors find that color-coding does not extend appreciably beyond established parameters; rather, it appears to operate along a continuum with welfare and spending on “blacks” at one end (heavily influenced by prejudice), spending on urban problems and drug addiction at the other end (not influenced by prejudice), and crime spending in the middle (moderately influenced by prejudice). In addition to shedding light on its breadth, the authors also identify emerging aspects of the color-coding phenomenon, including possible bidirectional effects across policies, and its subordination to political party affiliation in explanatory value.

Race, Racism, and Stratification Ideology in the Obama Era

The two final articles in this volume both deal with issues of racial prejudice or stratification ideology in the context of the election of Barack Obama to the presidency of the United States.

In the first of these, Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich offer a compelling account of the Obama phenomenon from the standpoint of Bonilla-Silva’s well-known
“color-blind racism” formulation (2006). Their success in this effort highlights the perspective’s applicability to some of the most important and cutting-edge political developments of our time. Briefly, Bonilla-Silva’s formulation seeks to analyze new forms of racism in advanced capitalist societies that are governed by ostensibly liberal, open, and inclusive race-based principles. As such, color-blind racism is seen as part and parcel of a new racial regime that ensures the perpetuation of deeply rooted racial inequities via subtle, institutional, and ostensibly nonracial dynamics (e.g., ideologies rationalizing inequalities on the basis of nonracial or postracial principles). Along these lines, the authors see President Obama as a potent cultural symbol, given what they see as his postracial persona and presentation of self and his tendency to distance himself from traditional civil rights leaders. In addition, Obama’s stances on political matters—including those of race and inequality—are seen as consistent with a color-blind logic. Examples cited include what the authors see as Obama’s postracial “self-help” strategy for the disadvantaged and his view of American society as an increasingly unified entity—both of which fail to confront the deep-rooted sources of racial inequity still characterizing American society.

Welch and Sigelman provide the final contribution to this volume. Their thoughtful piece assesses the historic election of Barack Obama in the context of a seminal issue in the racial attitudes literature: identifying the sources of change in whites’ racial attitudes. Their study provides valuable new evidence regarding how such change may occur. Using data for non-Hispanic whites from the 1992 to 2008 ANES, these authors measure stereotypes about blacks as “hardworking” (vs. “lazy”) and “intelligent” (vs. “stupid”)—two established measures of modern prejudice—across a nearly two-decade period. Change across the most recent (2004–2008) period gets special scrutiny in highlighting the apparent “Obama effect” on racial attitudes. These authors’ findings indicate that whites—when Obama was running for office and subsequently elected—moved notably in a more racially tolerant direction. The authors view this as evidence that one of the well-established causes of changes in racial attitudes—“dramatic events”—can moderate negative stereotypes (demographic change, specifically cohort replacement, is the other demonstrated cause). In addition, the authors suggest that, since the examined negative stereotypes are least pronounced among younger whites, such anti-black sentiment will likely continue to decline as the current century unfolds. All told, Welch and Sigelman make a strong case for the notion that Obama’s election has shaped the observed attitudinal changes, though its precise role—the authors remind us—will require additional study, ideally employing longitudinal data and alternative methodologies.

We reserve the final spot in the Introduction to say a few words about Professor Lee Sigelman, who lost his two-year battle with cancer just weeks after submitting the final draft of the article appearing in this volume (and the last article that he would write with his longtime collaborator, Susan Welch). Sigelman leaves a towering intellectual and scholarly legacy. As the former editor of American Political Science Review and American Politics Quarterly and as director of the political science program at the National Science Foundation, Sigelman had vital leadership
roles in his field. Within that field, Sigelman’s research focused most centrally on issues of public opinion, mass communication, and electoral behavior but also “extended in several directions, including American national government, research methods, comparative political analysis, and popular culture” (see Department of Political Science, George Washington University n.d.). Sigelman wrote seven books, including *Black Americans’ Views of Racial Inequality* (1991, with Susan Welch), a truly canonical work within the domains of racial attitude and stratification ideology research. Sigelman also regularly published in leading peer-reviewed journals, including *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, and *Journal of Politics*. Given the importance and centrality of Sigelman’s contributions to the research areas highlighted in this issue of *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, we respectfully dedicate this volume to his memory. As guest coeditors, we hope that we have helped to produce a product worthy of his legacy.

**Note**

1. Schuman et al. (1997) provide a comprehensive overview of the theory and history of racial attitudes, with primary focus on over-time trends among whites. Tuch and Martin’s (1997) edited volume focuses primarily on whites’ racial attitudes and their sociodemographic determinants, though they also devote three chapters to blacks’ attitudes. Most recent is Sears, Sidanius, and Bobo’s (2000) edited volume, focusing on contemporary debates over the roles of race and racism in American politics. The seminal (and only book-length) volume on stratification beliefs is more than 20 years old (Kluegel and Smith 1986). These authors develop a theoretical framework for understanding Americans’ beliefs about inequality and proceed to examine empirically beliefs about opportunity, economic outcomes, distributive justice, redistributive policies, and selected personal and political consequences of stratification ideology.

**References**


